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Weather



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# Henry County LOCAL

Wednesday April 26, 2006

## ADVERTISE

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### News

## Farmers benefit from new law

By Melissa Blankenship

Wednesday, April 26, 2006 8:28 AM CDT

A bill that could benefit local farmers overwhelmingly passed the House and Senate and was signed into law earlier this week.

"This is an incredible piece of legislation," said Bonnie Cecil, local farmer and member of the Community Farm Alliance (CFA). "We talk about diversification and trying to save farms and farmland. This is just one more piece of the puzzle."

House Bill 669, created with input from CFA members, requires state agencies to purchase Kentucky agricultural products whenever those products are available and meet agency standards. First written as a pilot program four years ago, the plan asked farmers to develop relationships with chefs at state agencies and sell their wares directly. Locally, farmers had some luck selling to General Butler State Park in Carrollton.

"They were very receptive last year, and I'm sure they'll be a good market for local producers," said CFA member Bill Burckle. "But there is potential to increase local sales."

Last year, Kentucky State Parks purchased more than \$21,000 worth of Kentucky produce in the first year of the Kentucky Proud buying program. This new legislation will not only strengthen that program, but lay the groundwork for local purchasing programs at other state agencies as well.

"We can literally sell meat and poultry, vegetables and fruits to any state organization from parks to prisons to schools, and we're hoping senior citizen centers get on board, too," Cecil said. "Henry County has great resources for making this happen. We're small enough to be able to establish direct, personal relationships with buyers, and we're so diverse in terms of our farming. I sometimes tease that we could feed the whole state!"

Burckle said that the only caveat to the program is that products must be competitively priced.

"Hopefully we can compete with the larger wholesalers," Burckle said.



Place



[this Friday](#)

"People don't always factor in freshness and quality when it comes to price."

[Farmers benefit from new law](#)

The bill also has a provision in it that requires state agencies to report annually to the Department of Agriculture and the Legislative Research Commission on the type and amount of local products purchased in order to better assess the disparities in product availability, price and quality.

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"It's a tad bit like a watchdog to make sure they comply and to track the results," Burckle said.

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Burckle added that this bill paves the way for provisions for more regional facilities that can help farmers produce more value-added products.

[Holocaust Remembrance Day was April 25](#)

"A school may not want to buy 30 heads of cabbage, but it might be interested in 30 gallons of cole slaw," Burckle said. "If we could provide a certified kitchen where farmers could come in and process their fresh fruit and produce into more marketable products, we'd see an even greater benefit to our local farming economy."

[Henry County Relay For Life now online](#)[Governor Fletcher signs seatbelt bill into law](#)

House Bill 669 passed both the House and Senate without any nay votes. The governor signed it into law earlier this week. New legislation will take effect July 12, still in time to get some locally grown fresh produce out into the market.

E-mail us about this story at [editor@hclocal.com](mailto:editor@hclocal.com).

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